

## **Union Budget 2020: Views of Mr. Subhash Sethi, Chairman, SPML Infra Limited**

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This year's union budget has the elements needed to boost our economy while providing stimulus to infrastructure sector including drinking water supply, irrigation, renewable energy, power generation, airport, railways sectors among others. The Rs. 3.6 lac crore (\$5 trillion) allocations for Jal Jeevan Mission to provide safe piped drinking water to rural India will certainly be a boon for our rural population who more often suffers from diseases borne out of contaminated water. Large scale infrastructure development is needed to make this mission a reality of making clean drinking water available to masses along with sustainable infrastructure for treating and reusing of generated wastewater in both urban and rural areas.

The announcement of putting in place comprehensive measures for 100 water-stressed districts is in line with the finding by Niti Aayog which has highlighted in the Water report suggesting that nearly 600 million people in India is likely to face extreme water stress and 21 major cities of the country will be facing zero groundwater levels this year. Unless drastic measures are not taken up now and a budget allocation is not properly utilised, critical issues facing the water sector in India will not be resolved. We require much focussed attention with all our sincerity along with financial resources, people resources, technological resources and smart partnerships between the government and the private companies to tackle this growing problem.

The Rs. 2.83 Lac crore (\$4 trillion) allocations towards agriculture, irrigation and rural development will help in better crop production that will translate into enhanced economic activities in rural heartland. The Rs. 12,300 crore (\$1.7 billion) allocations for Swachh Bharat Mission for the year will help the mission going forward with India's sanitation goals.

Rs. 20,000 crore (\$2.8 billion) allocations for the renewable energy sector will help India in reducing the carbon emissions as per our commitment under the Paris Agreement on climate change. Solar energy generation will be boosted by setting up solar-power capacity alongside the rail tracks as India is having the 4th largest rail network in the world. The concept of prepaid energy meters to save on losses being incurred by the distribution

utilities may get sorted with the replacement of conventional energy meters with the prepaid 'smart meters' in the next three years as announced by the Finance Minister.

The announcement to strengthen the framework related to contracts act is a good initiative as thousands of contract claims and arbitration cases are pending for realization for a very long period.

I feel that the measures announced for the infrastructure development, easing of norms, tax benefits along with other plans will prove to be beneficial in the long run towards creating a \$5 trillion economy in the next 5 years' time.